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TO: DCI

FROM:

SUBJECT: PLO Terrorism of Journalists
in Beirut

REMARKS:

1. This article reports, in considerable detail, how for years the PLO has terrorized journalists operating in Beirut. The article offers especially graphic accounts of such terrorist activity during the recent Israeli campaign.

2. If accurate, this article offers evidence of a PLO terrorist project that until now has gone unnoticed. It is a project whose impact on US policy would be significant.

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Observations

How the PLO Terrorized Journalists in Beirut

Kenneth R. Timmerman

MUCH was made during the Israeli campaign in Lebanon this past summer of attempts by Israel to muzzle the international press. The French daily *Le Monde*, in an article entitled "War against the Press?," reported on July 8, 1982 that a photographer for the Sygma agency was held up for several hours at Tel Aviv airport, and that after interrogation his film was temporarily seized. As for the American public, the climax was perhaps reached when, at the end of June, CBS broadcast a 30-second segment completely whited out, bearing the stamp of the Israeli censor.

In order to get around Israeli military censorship, which they feared would delete their best footage, the American television networks chartered a high-speed yacht to make the trip from Junieh to Cyprus, carrying their video cassettes of the bombardments of West Beirut. By the end of the siege, ten television companies from several countries were sharing this service, since the direct-transmission station in the mountains surrounding Beirut had been knocked out at the very beginning of the war . . . by Syrian shells. The price demanded by the Athenian millionaire who owned the yacht was \$80,000 per month.

By contrast with the allegedly restricted situation in Israel, correspondents in West Beirut constantly affirmed their freedom to report what they saw as they saw it, uninfluenced by the PLO which con-

trolled that part of the city. Marc Kravetz, in the French daily *Le Matin* (August 2), attacked Israel for charging that he and other journalists were biased in their reports. "Throughout this war, the press was able to evaluate the difference between a country without censorship and its neighbor," Kravetz wrote. "Most journalists working from the Israeli lines were at least theoretically supposed to submit their dispatches to a regime of censorship which we could not even imagine existing in West Beirut."

Yet the idyll Kravetz paints is false. The risks journalists incurred while working in Beirut did not come solely or even mostly from Israeli bombs. As an independent journalist who spent three weeks in a PLO jail this past summer (July 14-August 6), I can testify that when it came to muzzling the press, the PLO had things worked out to a fine science.

THERE were two centers for the foreign press crews in Beirut, the Commodore Hotel in the West and the Alexander in the East. Most of the television coverage of the siege was filmed from the rooftops of one of these two hotels, both of which, despite an occasional shell, were the safest place to be while still within reasonable view of the fighting.*

Both hotels spent enormous sums to keep their telexes and international telephones in operation. Israeli soldiers often came to the bar of the Alexander for a drink, while the Palestinian Press Agency, WAFA, according to Kravetz's own description, would arrive at the Commodore the day after bombardments to show selected journalists

"the damage caused by the enemy."

The information supplied by WAFA on the number of victims and their category—civilian or military—provided the basis for the dispatches leaving West Beirut, in the absence of other sources. The "Lebanese police" so often quoted in this context had ceased to function in West Beirut early in the siege. With deadlines to meet and under the risk of falling bombs, most journalists were content with what they got. This, then, was one source of the wild exaggeration in the figures of civilian dead reported throughout the war and especially during the siege of Beirut.

But this aspect of the story has been well documented, and is a staple of almost every military conflict. Much more important were the direct means employed by the PLO to control the journalists present in West Beirut, and the indirect means used to intimidate them.

First there was the press pass issued by WAFA with the bearer's photograph, a duplicate of which remained in WAFA's offices. Without this pass, no journalist could hope to circulate in West Beirut; caught photographing, or taking notes, he would be immediately arrested if not shot on sight.

No newspaper or other medium would commit the error of sending in to West Beirut someone who had adversely reported in the past on the activities of the PLO or the Syrians, for fear of his simply disappearing. Thus a first "selection" of journalists was made by the PLO: there simply were no unfriendly journalists operating in the besieged sector of the city. (Needless to say, no similar selection was made by the Israel Press Office. Western correspondents reporting from Tel Aviv freely criticized the Begin government's handling of the war.)

* The Alexander received several direct artillery hits from Palestinian positions on July 12, and was damaged by a car bomb in early August, while the Commodore was hit by a single Israeli bomb on August 4, the day of the heaviest fighting of the entire siege.

KENNETH R. TIMMERMAN, a new contributor, is a young American novelist and free-lance journalist who makes his home in Paris. He has written a book on the war in Lebanon and his experience in the prisons of the PLO.

The list of journalists who over the years have been murdered, shot, kidnapped, imprisoned, or otherwise intimidated in Beirut for their "indiscretions" is a long one: ten deaths from 1976 to 1981 alone, not counting those of this past summer. The ten slain journalists include two ABC television correspondents, Larry Buchman and Sean Toolan; Edouard Saab, the editor of *Orient le Jour*, the largest French-language daily in the entire region; Salim Laouzi, editor of the periodical *Al Hawadess*; and Robert Pfeffer, from the West German magazine *Stern*.

Sean Toolan was shot dead in the street in July 1980, after having completed an ABC film on Palestinian terrorism.

Robert Pfeffer was shot dead in front of his Beirut apartment shortly after he published a book on the use of PLO terrorist-training bases in Lebanon by the Baader-Meinhof gang.

Edouard Saab had been critical of Palestinian military activities in Lebanon since 1970. In September 1976, as he was leaving Beirut, his car was stopped at an Al Fatah checkpoint where he was killed by a machine-gun burst in the forehead.

The horribly mutilated corpse of Salim Laouzi was found by a shepherd near the village of Aramoun, on the outskirts of Beirut, on March 4, 1980. Threats against his life began in 1975. That summer a bombing totally destroyed the Beirut headquarters of his weekly magazine *Al Hawadess*, forcing him to move editorial offices to London, where Laouzi (a Lebanese Muslim) continued to fight against Palestinian and Syrian occupation of his country. On a return trip to Beirut to see his family, his car was stopped at a Syrian army roadblock, and Laouzi was abducted by militiamen from the pro-Syrian Saiqa group of the PLO. His body was not discovered until ten days after his disappearance.

In June 1980, Bernard Debussman, Beirut bureau chief for Reuters, was shot in the back with a pistol equipped with a silencer, upon leaving the home of a colleague in Beirut. He had been repeatedly threatened by the pro-Syrian faction of the PLO for his

articles on events inside Syria. The other Western newsmen who witnessed the shooting were hastily withdrawn from their posts. Debussman, after a long stay in the hospital, survived.

Peter Meyer-Ranke, Middle East correspondent for the Springer newspaper chain in West Germany, wrote in February 1982 that "Beirut is no place for an honest journalist to work." Referring to coverage of the heavy fighting between Syrian troops and Phalangists in 1978, Meyer-Ranke said that he had frequently observed "self-censorship, self-restrictions, and silence" from his Western colleagues in Palestinian and Syrian-controlled areas. "More important for them is the press card from the PLO and the Syrian government."

THINGS got no better during the siege of Beirut this past summer. For journalists West Beirut was the place to be. But to be in West Beirut, they had to play by the rules of the PLO.

Thus did the PLO campaign of intimidation and direct elimination over the past six years pay off. No one needed to be reminded of it. Nor would anyone try to "infiltrate" West Beirut unbeknownst to the PLO: armed Palestinian and Syrian guardposts covered every street, and Europeans stuck out like sore thumbs. It was impossible to circulate incognito. If you wanted to cover West Beirut, the press pass was a must.

There were other means of PLO control. For the journalist who was truly recalcitrant, foolhardy, or curious, there was the PLO prison system. Each of the 15 organizations comprising the Palestine Liberation Organization had its own prison in West Beirut. The primary aim of these prisons was to keep the Lebanese and other Arab inhabitants from fleeing the city during the siege; most of the inmates had been arrested at various PLO checkpoints on their way out. The "Arab telephone" communicated the news of this practice to all the inhabitants of the city, who, as a result, mostly remained behind as hostages and propaganda decoys, preferring the risk of Israeli bombardment to the certain terror of the PLO prisons.

The Western press corps failed completely to report on the existence of the prisons, despite the fact that many journalists were aware of them. When I was released after being held underground for 24 days during the bombings, I approached a well-known wire service with news of the prisons. I was coldly received, and dismissed with the assurance that they would report nothing. They still had people in West Beirut, and could not put them in jeopardy.

This is exactly what it means to say that the PLO is a terrorist organization. The efficient terrorist strikes in such a way as to make his potential victims feel vulnerable on every front, at every moment. That is his equivalent of the "deterrent" so often evoked in discussions of nuclear war, and it operated very effectively in the case of the news service I tried to interest in the story of the PLO prisons.

On July 30, during my imprisonment, I met two American journalists who were terrorized in this sense. This was in the subcellars of a modern building in Fakhani, one of the military headquarters of the PLO and thus a prime Israeli target. They were a couple, brought down to the shelter during a bombardment. Bit by bit they realized that off in the dark around them were not "conveniences" for soldiers wishing to recoup their energies during the raids but cells to hold Arab and Western prisoners, including myself. The couple broke down. "When we get back to the States we'll tell everyone how brave you are," said the girl to her "guardians." "We'll tell them how well you treated us."

The two never published a word on their brief and unwitting tour of the PLO prisons; it is extremely doubtful they will ever do so. Terror is not knowing when you will be struck down. As such it has been the most successful weapon of the PLO in its campaign to influence the Western news media.

A journalist who has actually been arrested or threatened by the PLO for some "indiscretion" becomes subject to the tacit understanding on the part of all concerned that such incidents will be

covered up for fear of further reprisals against associates and parent organizations. One American journalist I talked to denied reports that he had received Syrian threats, despite the fact that these had been confirmed by other sources. The journalist in question has since been relieved of duty on Middle Eastern affairs and been given an assignment elsewhere. This has happened time and time again, as it did with those who witnessed the gunning of Bernard Debussman.

The *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Associated Press*, *Newsweek*, and others have been cited by Israeli authorities as having deliberately covered up incidents of arrest, mistreatment, and overt

threats against their correspondents in Beirut at the hands of the PLO. According to the *Jerusalem Post*, "a condition for their release was that their media not mention their abduction."

Several French newsmen were held captive by the PLO during the siege of Beirut for periods ranging from six to twenty-four hours. Their film was examined, they were personally threatened and in several cases beaten and physically intimidated to insure their silence. In my own case, French consular authorities arranged a trade for my release. Since returning to France I have learned from sources in contact with the PLO that I have been written off as one who will never speak.

During my 3½ weeks of constant, direct intimidation, I was supposed to have "learned."

Terror, intimidation, and the law of silence: these are the basic tools used by the Palestine Liberation Organization to manipulate the international press. Most of the sins committed by Western newsmen under PLO constraint were sins of omission: showing bombed buildings but not the arms stockpiled in their basements; describing bombed hospitals but not the PLO fighters whose bases of operations were inside; and so forth. The list is infinite, but the effect unmistakable: the reversal of international opinion on the moral equation of the Middle East conflict.

Anti-Nuclear Fantasies

Patrick Glynn

THE anti-nuclear movement has typically expressed itself in broad, emotional gestures of public protest—marches and rallies, theatrical demonstrations of the horrible effects of nuclear bombs, popular referenda for some sort of "freeze" on the arms race. But along with this popular protest, a specialized literature has been forming—a growing corpus of "anti-nuclear books" that attempt to provide more specific theoretical underpinnings for the movement. The best known of these books is Jonathan Schell's *The Fate of the Earth*. Two major new additions to the genre are *Indefensible Weapons* and *Beyond the Cold War*—the former a

collaborative effort by two activist American professors, Robert Jay Lifton and Richard Falk, the latter a collection of polemical essays by E.P. Thompson, the well-known British Marxist historian and spokesman for the European disarmament campaign.*

In *Indefensible Weapons*, Robert Jay Lifton and Richard Falk direct our attention to a phenomenon called "nuclearism," which they define as the "psychological, political, and military dependence on nuclear weapons, the embrace of the weapons as a solution to a wide variety of human dilemmas, most ironically that of 'security.'" At different points in the text, nuclearism is characterized as a "disease," a fundamentalist "religion," and an "addiction."

The book consists of two long

essays, one by each author, with a jointly written introduction and conclusion. In the first essay, called "Imagining the Real," Lifton, who teaches psychiatry at Yale, argues that the sheer presence of nuclear arms and the dangers they pose are responsible for a wide variety of psychic ills in modern societies; that governments have tended to cope with the nuclear peril by taking refuge in the neurotic "illusion" that stockpiling the weapons can provide security; and that the cure for our problem lies in rejecting such illusions—in "casting off our

* *Indefensible Weapons: The Political and Psychological Case Against Nuclearism*, by Robert Jay Lifton and Richard Falk, Basic Books, 301 pp., \$15.50. *Beyond the Cold War: A New Approach to the Arms Race and Nuclear Annihilation*, by E.P. Thompson, Pantheon, 193 pp., \$15.00.

PATRICK GLYNN, a new contributor, is senior editor of the *Journal of Contemporary Studies*.